

SCOTLAND'S 'SECRET' SHAME

T.C.T. DISCUSSION DOCUMENT (5.4.06)

The debate within The Communist Tendency (affiliated to the Republican Communist Network) was provoked by Jack McConnell's 2005 Valentines Day Summit on religious sectarianism in Scotland, and by the BBC's Panorama programme, *Scotland's Secret Shame*, on Celtic and Rangers, broadcast soon afterwards. We are publishing this to try and expand the debate on such a critically important and much neglected issue for socialist republicans in Scotland and further afield.

Tam Cowan has even (if unintentionally!) added impetus to this debate, illustrating the significance of the subject. He invited Jack McConnell on to his *Offside* programme (BBC Scotland, 6.3.06) a satirical rant at Scottish football and the SFA. He questioned McConnell about 'Scotland's Secret Shame' by famously asking him, "What's secret about it?" Cowan 1 - McConnell 0. More seriously, we have UEFA making a bizarre ruling over Rangers supporters' sectarian behaviour, at the Championship League matches against Villareal. They initially washed their hands by declaring such behaviour to be "related to a social problem in Scotland"!

THE KICK-OFF

1.

SCOTLAND'S SECRET SHAME - BRITAIN'S POLITICAL BLAME!

Scotland's secret shame - No, we're not talking about the nominal Scotsman, Fettes-educated liar and mass murderer, Tony Blair; nor his right hand man, Scotbrit Brown, who together stole last May's General Election with only 36% of the vote. This is about a burning political and social issue, which has too often been neglected in the past and needs to be addressed by socialist republicans in Scotland and further afield today and tomorrow.

Sectarianism and bigotry are very controversial issues in Scotland. They were given a very high political profile with Jack McConnell's Valentines Day Summit in 2005. He mainly laid the blame for these problems at the door of Celtic and Rangers football clubs and their supporters. Sectarianism and bigotry in Scotland were also given a Britain-wide media prominence in the BBC's *Panorama* programme, *Scotland's Secret Shame*,

shown soon after, on February 27th.

‘JACK OF HEARTS’ VALENTINES DAY ‘LOVE-IN’

McConnell chose a good day to massacre the truth! There were some very strange bedfellows around the table at the Valentines Day Summit. Yet this only shows that a British-wide consensus and political popular front exists around some very false notions of sectarianism and bigotry.

This is highlighted by the most the recent and prominent campaign in the field - ‘Nil by Mouth’. They make the same mistake in attributing these evils to Rangers and Celtic football clubs and their supporters.

The press also takes this line, particularly tabloids like the *Daily Record*. One moment they are piously pronouncing against sectarianism. Then the next, they use Celtic and Rangers to fan the flames of bigotry, often through the use of lurid and screaming headlines. They rarely let the truth get in the way of a ‘good’ sectarian story, particularly before and after matches at Parkhead and Ibrox. The result of this is to make the problem appear to be a ‘sporting’ rather than a serious socio-political issue. This lets the politicians off the hook and this is no accident.

THE BBC’S SCOTLAND’S SECRET SHAME AND BLAME GAME!

BBC’s *Panorama* programme went Britain-wide. It made Scotland look like a sectarian hellhole, little different from Northern Ireland. Therefore, how lucky Scotland is to be part of the Great British Union! The Scottish Parliament can take heart from the less sectarian atmosphere in England, and get the support of a sympathetic and understanding Westminster government, under the paternalistic leadership of Tony Blair and New Labour!

Once again, this programme saw the main problem as lying in the working class and Celtic and Rangers supporters, in particular. However, it did also mention certain links with Ireland! But it didn’t follow this through. Instead, the journalist, Graham Spiers, showed a middle class prejudice (which is quite common) by branding Rangers and Celtic supporters as “uneducated”. What he really means is there are not many university-educated chaps like him among the ‘lower orders’. He forgets that the working class is ‘educated’ by middle class, press, television and radio hacks like him steeped in class bigotry and prejudice. They resort to finger-pointing to disguise their own role in all this.

One unintentional moment of light (blue) relief in the programme was provided by a Rangers Director. He gave us the new football phenomenon - “the ninety minute bigot”! Just as ridiculously, we ask, “What if the game goes into extra time!” The programme’s title also begs the question, “What is secret about the problem?” - only its true causes.

But on the real causes of bigotry the programme did little to enlighten us.

THE SCOTTISH SOCIALIST PARTY'S DEAFENING SILENCE

How did the SSP leaders and the *Voice* match up to the occasion? All we got was a deafening silence. There was neither political guidance nor leadership for the many thousands of working class and other people who look to the SSP for such a lead. It appears that electorability (and bourgeois respectability?) comes before tackling this controversial, but highly significant, socio-political issue.

Where is the radicalism, the political courage and leadership needed to address this issue head on? Don't forget the importance of issues like this is not always determined by the politicians, but emanates from the people on the streets. The media also plays a role, in people's understanding of the issue, usually by distorting it. By not giving a radical lead the SSP is leaving the field wide open to the British establishment and medias' consensus; or to the radical Right and their unsavoury allies. Unless this issue is addressed by the SSP, it will return to haunt the SSP when the political heat is really on.

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FOOTBALL IS A POLITICAL DIVERSION - 'RELIGIOUS' SECTARIANISM AND BIGOTRY ARE NOT THE REAL PROBLEM

The British establishment and its media use football as a smokescreen to hide the real causes of sectarian strife and bigotry in Scotland. The existence of Celtic and Rangers football clubs and their supporters may appear to be the most visible embodiment of sectarianism and bigotry in Scotland. However, they are but the expression of a deeper and more widespread problem.

Scotland has indeed had a past marred by religious sectarianism and bigotry. As recently as the 1920's the Church of Scotland took a bigoted and racist stance against Irish Catholic immigrants. There were mass Protestant anti-Catholic parties in both Glasgow and Edinburgh in the 1930s. The Orange Order then had a solid base of support within the Church of Scotland and the Tory Party was linked to the Ulster Unionist Party. There has been job discrimination against Catholics in quite a number of areas, particularly shipbuilding. Some of these attitudes still (ma)linger on in Scottish society.

Nevertheless, loyalist unionism never came to dominate Scottish politics as it did in Northern Ireland. The Labour Party in Scotland was always open to Catholics. The

Labour Party won control of many Scottish councils, including the largest, Glasgow. It has also formed seven British governments since 1945. This meant that Catholics had avenues of economic, social and political advance, which certainly didn't exist in Northern Ireland.

Scotland has no gerrymandered Protestant and Catholic ghettos. The Orange Order has no significant representation in the Scottish Parliament or base of support in the Church of Scotland. The Tory Party has long broken its direct links with the Ulster Unionist Party and has fielded Catholic candidates, aiming to get the Catholic middle class vote. Scotland has had a Scottish Secretary, Helen Liddell, from a Catholic background; so indeed is the current First Minister's wife, Bridget McConnell. Even Rangers now field Catholic players.

It is a misrepresentation of reality, to lump together the following as examples of an ongoing religious sectarianism with its roots in Scotland's Presbyterian past:- the undoubted and sometimes shocking violence that occurs around 'Old Firm' matches; the demand for official permission for Irish republican marches; the intimidation associated with the Orange marching season; and the unsavoury Scotland/Northern Ireland loyalist links, highlighted by Johnny Adair's current residency here. The songs celebrated at either end of an 'Old Firm' game are neither psalms nor hymns. The flags being waved are 'national' not denominational.

THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM - THE BRITISH STATE'S ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER IRELAND

There has been a huge decline in religious influence on the state in Scotland. The numbers identifying with the major Christian denominations and attending their churches, especially the Church of Scotland, has continued to decline. You have to look elsewhere to see why so-called 'sectarian' strife is still to be found in Scotland. The root cause lies in continued British rule over Northern Ireland. Scotland and (Northern) Ireland have long had close economic and social links. Irish tenant farmers and later, workers (both Catholic and Protestant), came to Scotland from Ireland looking for jobs. Some of the divisions and conflicts over national identity have been imported over here. The Orange Order is one organisation which was imported from the north of Ireland to Scotland. It has been a central and continuous influence in promoting sectarianism and trying to maintain Protestant privilege. It still wants the UK to be an officially Protestant state with a Protestant monarch.

The British state has actively promoted sectarian division in Northern Ireland, in order to maintain its control. Sectarianism is designed to pit Protestant against Catholic, and worker against worker. In the past it split the Irish-Irish from the Irish-British; today it tries to sustain a division between the Irish and the Ulster-British. What we are seeing in Northern Ireland is a national struggle, not a religious struggle.

The most advanced element in the struggle to create a united Irish nation, has always upheld the original republican demand for the unity of 'Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter'. This is anti-sectarian by definition. The most reactionary element today defines itself as Ulster-British, an identity which only includes Protestants, and is therefore sectarian by definition. This Ulster-Britishness can only be maintained by the continued partition of Ireland; the continued occupation of the north by the British army; a loyalist statelet, police force and militia; a loyalist paramilitary 'reserve; and the continuous celebration of Orange triumphalism.

Yet, despite loyalism's somewhat embarrassing public image, it still provides part of the forces necessary to maintain British rule. British Direct Rule and military occupation were not enough to suppress the Irish republican opposition. And, despite some woolly-minded and sentimental thinking, the British state has no intention of giving up control of 'The Six Counties'. To do so, would be to signal to the world, the weakness of British imperialism and the likely end of the UK itself.

OFFICIAL ANTI-SECTARIAN CAMPAIGN PART OF BRITISH STATE'S STRATEGY TO MAINTAIN UNIONIST CONTROL THROUGHOUT THE UK

The timing of the Establishment's newfound concern with the problem of "religious sectarianism and bigotry" in Scotland is also significant. For most of the period of Ireland's struggle against the British state, Scotland could hardly be described as Ireland's ally. Scottish regiments could be relied upon to uphold the Union when asked to serve in Ireland. As late as 1955, the Scottish Unionist Party (then still linked to the Ulster Unionists) could win over 50% of the vote.

Many Catholics, in both Northern Ireland and Scotland, saw the wider British state as a possible ally. This state might be able to contain the official loyalist unionism found in Northern Ireland and the unofficial, but nevertheless, still menacing loyalist unionism found in the Central Belt of Scotland. The Labour Party enjoyed massive support amongst Catholics in Scotland because it was seen to be both anti-sectarian and liberal unionist. The British state also had greater resources to address the economic and social problems, which affected the Catholic working class particularly badly in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

However, with the decline of the British Empire, the UK's continued slide in the world's economic league, and the cutbacks in the British welfare state, support for the Union and a British national identity have declined sharply in Scotland. Republican sentiment has grown, particularly since the 1980s. The British state has had to undergo extensive constitutional change to try to hold the UK together. New Labour took office in 1997 committed to a New Unionist policy of 'devolution-all-round', for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Each devolved assembly is meant to take responsibility for maintaining the Union in its

own territory, in return for some local legislative or administrative autonomy. By far the biggest problem facing the UK state has been the setting-up of a stable regime in Northern Ireland. The very purpose of that statelet's continued existence has been to buttress Ulster Unionist/Protestant supremacy, as a guarantor for the continued Union. Ian Paisley knows this, which is why his reactionary, sectarian DUP refuses to share government office with Sinn Fein (or even the SDLP), even in a reconstituted British Stormont, which a disarmed Republican Movement now recognises.

Ever since the Civil Rights Struggle, events in Northern Ireland have found an echo in Scotland, amongst both Irish republican and nationalist supporters and amongst loyalist and Orange Order supporters. Now, however, there is a British-backed 'pacification process' in place, highlighted by the Good Friday Agreement. But the UK government has failed to get its central building block in place - a power-sharing Executive leading a reformed Stormont. Therefore, the Scottish Executive has been given the task of quarantining Scotland from any political repercussions over here. This is why, McConnell is portraying the continued 'troubles' over here, as an issue of sectarianism and bigotry rooted in Scotland's religious history, in general, and Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs, in particular.

NEW LAWS AGAINST SECTARIANISM TARGET THE REPUBLICAN OPPOSITION

Since the Valentines Day Summit, the Scottish Executive has passed new laws. These allow the police to target clubs and pubs displaying 'sectarian' material. This has led to a number of traditional Irish pubs having posters showing the Hunger Strikers removed. None of the removed material attacks Protestants. This shows the hollowness of the official claims to be combating religious sectarianism and bigotry. The targets of the official clampdown are Irish republican symbols of resistance to British occupation and rule.

Revolutionary republicans and communists reject the 'plague on both your houses', it's a 'tribal war', or 'it's all due to football' approach to the issue of sectarianism and bigotry in Scotland. This is the approach adopted by the British Unionist politicians and the liberal media which bows to their agenda. It is an approach which disguises the political reality, both in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The pretence of dealing equally with 'two warring tribes' is highlighted by the orchestrated media hounding of Republicans in Northern Ireland. They have not been responsible for a single attack on British state forces, loyalists or Protestants in Northern Ireland since the second 1997 Ceasefire. In the meantime, loyalists have killed innocent Catholics and Protestants, mounted viciously sectarian campaigns around the annual Drumcree march, at Harryville Church, Holy Cross Primary School and are currently pursuing their campaign of ethnic cleansing, directed at Catholics in Ahoghill and at Asians and others in South Belfast. Even a full scale armed loyalist riot, directed at 'their own' police force, the PSNI/RUC, in a fit of pique at being denied the right to

intimidate and harass nationalists in North Belfast, was handled as if it were a minor breach of the peace offence!

SILENCE FOR THE POPE - WHY?

Organisations like Nil by Mouth, no matter how well-intentioned, ignore the wider context, when they seek official support for their opposition to 'religious' sectarianism and bigotry. Treating the problem as if it is religious in origin can also be totally counterproductive. A good example of this was the official decision to have a minute's silence at some S.P.L. matches after the death of Pope John Paul. The same press which promoted the minute's silence then turned on the fans who broke it, accusing them of religious intolerance and lack of respect! It is absolutely intolerable that a minutes silence was demanded for an extremely reactionary old man who lived in Rome and had no connection whatsoever with Scottish football or any team within it.

Given this official high-level equation of Celtic with Catholicism, Rangers fans could be forgiven for thinking that Celtic's board, team and supporters are all lined up behind the Pope! We doubt that any of the Parkhead players would subscribe to being one of the 'Pope's Eleven' - they'd rather be one of Gordon Strachan's! Neither Celtic, nor any other Scottish team is a Catholic club. So why the minute's silence - other than an excuse to stoke up resentment and bigotry.

PLAYING UP RELIGIOUS SECTARIANISM - IGNORING ANTI-IRISH RACISM

Funnily enough, on the occasion when real bigotry and anti-Irish racism are blatantly on display, the same media ignores its significance. The hounding of Celtic's Portadown born Irish Catholic player, Neil Lennon, on and off the pitch, by loyalist bigots, is a disgrace. He is also subjected to vile anti-Irish racist abuse at most grounds he plays at. None of this is ever officially reported or campaigned against in Scotland. However, following the cause to its roots, would not take you to Scotland's old Presbyterian religious sectarianism. It would take you to that 'Little Rock' in Ulster and the festering sore which is the product of continued British rule in Northern Ireland. This is not something the Scottish establishment and mainstream media want to highlight!

Anti-Irish racism is not even recognised as a problem in Scotland. Indeed it is tolerated. Tam Cowan, who is about as funny as a boil on the arse, sometimes uses his Wednesday column in the *Daily Record* to crack anti-Irish jokes. Therefore the official (and hypocritical and limited) anti-racist campaigns show their own blind spot. Whereas British imperial power has retreated from Asia, Africa and the West Indies, it has no intention of finally abandoning its first colony, so anti-Irish racism still has its uses over here.

The real divide is not a religious one between Protestant and Catholic, but a political one between British unionist and Irish republican. Many loyalist bigots find it difficult to

understand the difference between Irish republicanism and Catholicism, infamously hating 'Fenian bastards'. Yet the nineteenth century Irish Fenian Brotherhood included both Catholics and Protestants and was strongly opposed by the Catholic hierarchy. Of course, it is very much in the interests of the British establishment to portray a national democratic struggle as a religious sectarian squabble.

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THE BRITISH STATE IS OPPRESSIVE AND DIVISIVE

There are those on the revolutionary Left who maintain that the formation of the British state was a liberating and progressive development. It led to the Industrial Revolution and a united British working class. We profoundly disagree with this. There has never been anything progressive or remotely liberating (except for the ruling class and capitalists) for the vast majority who lived in the British state and its empire. Just think of those slaughtered for opposing British rule and wanting independence. Remember those millions who died in the 1914-8 "war to end all wars" to maintain the British Empire and its class rule and extreme privilege.

Today, British trade unions are in chains, shackled by the most draconian anti-union laws in Europe. Migrant workers and asylum seekers are harassed by British officials and locked up in British detention centres. Travelling people are hounded around Britain and working class youths are subjected to vilification, curfews and ASBOs. Ask any of these people how 'progressive' the British state is.

RELIGIOUS STRIFE AND VIOLENCE NOTHING NEW

Religious strife, and sometimes, extreme violence between Catholics and Protestants, is nothing new in these islands, nor indeed Europe and elsewhere. Such strife was a fact of life long before Celtic and Rangers were founded. Catholics and Protestants found themselves on different sides in political battles in the past. The Union of the Crowns of England and Scotland in 1603 led to another attempt to achieve centralized political control of these islands. One area where resistance was particularly strong, was in the clan-based Gaelic (and Catholic) social order in Ulster. King James, acting on behalf of both the English and Scottish ruling classes, transplanted largely Lowland Scots Protestant settlers in this area to counter the rebellious natives.

In the 1639-50 Civil War of the Three Kingdoms, Irish Catholic Royalists faced both Scottish Presbyterians and English Puritan Republicans. Yet, even then, the most advanced class elements were able to overcome some of the false divisions encouraged by the ruling class of the day. The revolutionary democratic Levellers in England refused to go to Ireland to put down 'Catholic' rebellion. They preferred class solidarity to religious loyalty. We could do with similar 'levelling' today!

The 1707 Act of Union was used by the ruling classes of England and Scotland to cement a Protestant British identity, making it easier to unite the lower orders behind the British Union and to provide cannon-fodder for a rapidly expanding British Empire. This Empire was based on expanding capitalist trade, agriculture and manufacture. Those pre-capitalist societies, which got in the way, were mercilessly suppressed and subjugated. This led to the outlawing of much Gaelic culture. This followed the earlier suppression of Catholic worship in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands alike.

THE ORANGE ORDER - DEFENDING PROTESTANT PRIVILEGE AND THE BRITISH STATE

By the end of the eighteenth century, these divisions were being overcome, when many Presbyterians and Catholics, and even some Anglicans, in Ireland joined to form a united front to oppose British rule. The United Irishmen had the Protestant, Wolfe Tone, as one of its leaders. This new-found, anti-sectarian class unity led the British ruling class to give its backing to the newly formed Orange Order in order to uphold God and the Crown, Britain and the Empire.

In the past, the British ruling class found it convenient to blame all opposition to its rule on 'Papist plots'. The Orange Order has continued with this line, long after the British ruling class turned to other scapegoats - Jacobins, Bolsheviks, or Islamic extremists today. Even when founded in 1795, the Orange Order's knowledge of real history was slender. The Dutch Orange, King William fought the Battle of the Boyne (the site is now in the Irish Republic), in 1690, with the blessing of the Pope of the day, in a European power game; certainly not to defend some distant Protestant 'colony' in Ulster.

The Orange Order, and the closely associated loyalist paramilitaries, have a history of instigating pogroms, or ethnic cleansing, directed against Catholics, republicans and nationalists, and those living in mixed partnerships and families. In return for privileges in job and housing allocation, the Orange Order loyally enforced the rule of the British Crown and state in 'the Six Counties'. It was the British Establishment figure and Orangeman, Lord Carson, who created the armed Ulster Volunteer Force, in 1912, to prevent even a liberal unionist measure, Irish Home Rule, from being implemented. British senior military officers in the Curragh Mutiny backed him.

The loyalist forces were mobilised once more, when a large majority of the Irish people voted for Sinn Fein independence candidates in the 1918 General Election. Over the next few years, loyalists managed to carve out that Six County political slum, which was ruled through Stormont, as a one-party sectarian statelet for the next fifty years - fully subsidised by the UK Exchequer.

Whenever there was a possibility that Catholics and Protestants might unite to fight against exploitation, the Orange Order and loyalist forces moved in to line-up the

Protestant workers behind the Unionist bosses once more. This happened when Catholics and Protestants united and fought over unemployment benefits in the 1930s.

In 1972, loyalists once more showed their opposition to any liberal reform of the Union, when they mobilised the Ulster Workers' Council (Catholic workers not invited) against the power-sharing (middle class Protestant and Catholic) Sunningdale Agreement. The British government backed down surprisingly quickly in the face of this particular 'strike', showing no inclination to uphold the rights of the ordinary person 'to go about their normal everyday business'! Obviously this particular strike didn't represent a move to the Left.

LOYALIST REACTION TODAY - THE BRITISH FACE OF FASCISM

Today there are few jobs and houses on offer, so loyalist privilege consists more of the 'historical right' to triumphantly parade and march all over the political hopes and aspirations of Catholics, nationalists and republicans and trample these into the ground.

The Orange Order has many of the hallmarks of fascism in its organisation, politics and practices. Father Alex Reid got it quite wrong in his recent attack in Belfast on 'Nazi' loyalism. Ulster Loyalism is not a nasty German import, but a very British homegrown product that preceded Nazism by over a decade. Loyalism doesn't need goose-steps and swastikas. It has the lambeg drum and the Union Jack. Loyalism has and will use all means it considers necessary to maintain its 'religious' and 'racial' purity, i.e. its Britishness. The only 'democracy' it is interested in, is that which gives it an inbuilt veto to protect its privileged position within Northern Ireland. It point blank refuses to recognise anything which does not go along with this.

There is no 'British road' to real democracy and freedom for the people of Ireland, Scotland, Wales or England. The example of Ireland shows the sort of allies and measures the British ruling class is prepared to adopt if we ever make serious moves to break free from their UK. state. Real democracy (i.e. rule by the majority and not an elite class) can only be achieved by revolutionary working class struggle and unity.

THE SECOND HALF!

4

FOOTBALL - THE NEW OPIATE OF THE MASSES

Marx was absolutely correct when he said that "religion is the opiate of the masses". It was one way countless millions of workers and their families escaped from the hell on earth of their daily existence at that time. They were led to look to a life after death,

which would be heaven, compared to the one on earth!

Religion is still being used as a socio-political opiate in some countries. However, it no longer has the same influence or following in the West, particularly Europe, as it had in Marx's time. But today football is truly global and supported by billions worldwide. The majority of these are working class and football now serves a role similar to that which religion used to. It enables billions to escape the drudgery, and in many cases misery, of their daily lives by going to football matches, or by watching it on TV at home, in pubs or cafes, or by reading about it.

Big business is well aware of this and has moved in big-time. They economically control, exploit and market football on a massive global scale. They also exploit the competitive nature of the game politically and use their media to pit country against country in a very nationalistic and racist way. Just look at the press and TV when England plays Germany, France, Italy or Turkey. Some British papers, such as the *Sun*, even have separate editions so they can play off England against Scotland in England and Scotland against England in Scotland, whenever matches between these two countries occur! Of course, they then blame the fans if they resort to violence in response to all the media's nationalist and racist hype.

Football has become a microcosm of the worldwide class system. Far from things getting better in their 'free market' economy, the rich clubs and players just get richer; whilst the poorer clubs just get poorer! Even Gordon Taylor, Secretary of the English players' union, gets £650,000 a year salary – so he too is big business!

Now things are so bad that Russian billionaire, Abramovich, who got his money by the ruthless exploitation of Russian workers, is the most powerful figure in English football (don't tell us the FA run the game!). He effectively bought Chelsea the Premiership title last season and is doing the same again this season. Oh, how the Russian poor could use Abramovich's millions. Cue Mr. Murray and Mr. Desmond, the filthy rich, biggest shareholders of Rangers and Celtic respectively.

Multinational business has taken hold in Scottish football too, as can be seen with Romanov's takeover of Hearts. No doubt Lithuanian workers would appreciate getting their hands on some of Romanov's millions. (Where are the Bolsheviks when you need them!) Romanov now wants to take over the Bosnian team, Celik, too – no relation to the Glasgow club!

THE S.P.F.A. BACKS OFFICIAL ANTI-SECTARIAN AND LIMITED ANTI-RACIST CAMPAIGNS BUT DOES NOT FIGHT BIG BUSINESS PROMOTION OF MASSIVE PAY DIFFERENTIALS

It is highly commendable that the footballers' own trade union, the Scottish Professional Footballers' Association (SPFA), is campaigning against religious intolerance and most forms of racism. But trade unions are also, in the first instance, meant to be about improving the pay and working conditions of ALL their members.

It is time something was done about the truly frightening wage differentials between the wages of players in the lesser teams and those in the bigger clubs. In the case of Celtic and Rangers these differentials are obscene. Some of the players in the lower leagues suffer poverty wages. Much was rightly made about Clyde beating Celtic in the Scottish Cup. However, next to nothing was said about the fact that Clyde's players (who are just one division below Celtic) are only on £150 a week, compared to the £30,000 some of Celtic's players get. That is a diabolical liberty and should be a crime!

There should be a drive to towards greater equalization between the bottom and top wages in football. American grid-iron football does it, and that is in the 'heart of the beast' of global capitalism. However, full-time trade union officials, in general, assist the rich to get richer, whilst largely ignoring the plight of their poorest members. The SPFA is part of the GMB. It would be great to see all the players in the SPFA set an example, and stand together in solidarity, richer with poorer members, to lift the wages at the bottom. However, this won't happen unless the action is initiated, led and controlled by the poorer players and teams. Such action could tap into the massive sympathy there is amongst football supporters, for poorer players and clubs, in what is still the most popular game of the working class, by far. Pickets outside Parkhead and Ibrox - now that would be something worth supporting!

CAPITALIST ECONOMICS - A PLAGUE ON BOTH YOUR CORPORATE HOUSES

Celtic and Rangers are both corporate businesses, the same as most other professional football clubs. Like all big clubs they mercilessly exploit their fans. The firms they employ to make merchandise, use cheap, sometimes even child slave labour. The big clubs make obscene amounts of money from this. Some of the money goes towards players' wages, but we never hear of big-earning players complaining about this. Isn't it strange how football players seem to be exempt from being taken to task, or questioned about their social attitudes, or their political opinions. Stars and superstars, in particular, are not judged by 'normal' standards. Hopefully, this document will change things a tiny bit and start the ball rolling in that direction - all questions on a postcard to Ibrox and Parkhead please!

Celtic and Rangers football clubs are not the causes of religious sectarianism and bigotry. However, both clubs well know that the existence of these evils raises passions which heighten the tensions and increase the competition upon which their profits thrive. Of course, the club owners are not too concerned about this reality. They aren't to be found on the terraces and streets, or in the pubs and housing schemes, where working class people bear the brunt and pay the price of 'religious sectarianism' and anti-Irish

racism.

Outside political pressure may have forced the clubs to sponsor official anti-sectarian campaigns, but these don't address the central problem already outlined. They also know this is a political problem which it is not their business to address - and they won't. After all, it will take a political and social revolution to change the situation and their businesses would go with it!

Even if a total clampdown on all the authorities' perceived 'sectarian' displays, singing and behaviour was successfully imposed in the football grounds, this would not eliminate it, but displace it elsewhere, since football itself is not the cause of the problem.

POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CELTIC AND RANGERS SUPPORTERS

Supporters of both Celtic and Rangers come mainly from the same working class base. Yet, there is a political difference between the supporters of the two clubs. The British establishment is well aware of this too. Its current anti-sectarian campaigns make sure they don't tread on any sensitive toes.

The political parties in Scotland have largely abandoned one-sided religious sectarianism. This makes it easier to stand above the fray and manipulate both sides for divide-and-rule purposes. Labour draws its support from both mainly working class Catholics and Protestants, and the Tories from mainly middle class Protestants and Catholics.

However, when it comes to the Scottish football establishment, there is still a sectarian divide. There is no chance of getting to be the SFA's Chief Executive unless you are a freemason! This isn't the freemasonry of Burns or the eighteenth and nineteenth century revolutionary republicans, but that very Scottish freemasonry, which acts as a more 'respectable' anti-Catholic alternative to the Orange Order. One consequence of this is the notorious refereeing of 'Old Firm' games to the benefit of the Union Jack, red hand of Ulster (or even the cross of St. George) flag waving team! This also extends, at times, to the refereeing of other matches, to ensure that 'true blue' Rangers have the best chance of winning either the Scottish Cup or League.

Rangers supporters sing "God save the Queen", "Rule Britannia", of guarding Protestant "Derry's walls" and being up to their knees in "Fenian blood", and other such touching ditties. Celtic supporters mainly sing ballads associated with Ireland's struggles for freedom from British rule, including the more recent Republican struggles. They sing about those fighters murdered, imprisoned or deported for defying the British state. Some of this is sentimental republicanism. There is also a reactionary anti-Protestant Ancient Order of Hibernian contingent among the Celtic supporters. The AOH tried to mimic the organisation and style of the Orange Order, but for Catholics. Fortunately the

AOH is very small and is opposed by all sincere republicans.

However, by and large, the potential for support for Scottish republicanism and for freedom from the British Crown and state is much greater amongst Celtic fans. Socialists know the difference between selling papers outside Parkhead and Ibrox! And, if your paper has the title 'republican', you would only try selling it outside Ibrox if accompanied by a Citizen Army!

5

NO TO OFFICIAL RELIGIOUS DIVIDE AND RULE - NO TO FAITH SCHOOLS

There is also something very hypocritical about official campaigns against religious sectarianism and bigotry, when the state itself supports and, under New Labour, wants to promote faith schools which divide children on the grounds of their religion. Although these schools are jealously guarded and championed by the Catholic Church, the Cardinal and its bishops, many people, including Catholics, oppose them. Far from protecting Catholics from discrimination and abuse, as its supporters claim; the real purpose of this religiously segregated education is to enhance the political power of the Catholic hierarchy. It also suits the state's divide-and-rule policy.

A principled stand needs to be taken when Blair wants to extend the 'blasphemy' laws to win the support of Muslim clerics; and when both New Labour and the Tories want to create thousands more faith schools. At present this is how New Labour hope to win back the Muslim vote alienated by the war in Iraq. Such reactionary thinking has even drawn some of the Left into its slipstream, notably George Galloway (with the SWP close behind.)

'Blasphemy' laws give the state and those rich enough to pay for lawyers a powerful tool to silence critics. No matter how piously those who advocate and run faith schools claim the contrary, these schools help to breed religious elitism, especially in today's world, where religion is once more being politicised for reactionary ends.

Segregated religious schooling also provides a base for those who want to build up the 'religious' vote. Just look where this has taken the USA under Bush! Religious intolerance helps to push politics to the Right. The rise of the Christian supremacist and fundamentalist Right is preparing the ground for a police state and creeping fascism. And Bush has his devout Christian servant, Blair, in the UK pushing a political religious agenda to meet the needs of US imperialism's junior British partner. The rise of corporate global capitalism has led to the promotion of new divisions in our class. The Right now want to pit religion against religion - the 'Christian West' against the 'Muslim East', all very conveniently replacing the Cold War between the USA and USSR, now

that the latter 'Evil Empire' no longer exists. And let us spare a thought for how most religions treat women and gays.

Those who have been persecuted can, themselves, persecute in their turn. Just recently we have the case where both young adults and children at an Orthodox Jewish school in North London tormented and abused a Muslim woman and her family who happened to live opposite their school.

SECULARISM IS THE ANSWER TO STATE-PROMOTED RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS

Moves to end separate faith schools in this country must also ensure that state schools are not dominated by that watered-down Protestant ethos, which still forms part of official British identity. The Queen is still head of the Church of England and sends a representative to the Church of Scotland's General Assembly. Whilst support for the Queen, her loyal armed services and for Westminster - 'the mother of parliaments' - are the main features of officially-promoted Britishness, resort to reactionary Protestant sentiment, can still be used in those areas where these aren't sufficient to hold the red, white and blue line, particularly Northern Ireland.

Schools must be truly secular. Religion must be a private, not a state-promoted, public matter. Religions and other world beliefs (such as humanism, atheism) should be taught as subjects in schools like any other. We must not confuse religious instruction with religious education.

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THE NEED FOR A REPUBLICAN UNITED FRONT TO COUNTER THE BRITISH UNIONIST POPULAR FRONT

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, its anti-democratic Crown powers, its continued imperialist role in the world, and its state-promoted reactionary British identity, all need to be opposed consistently. From the extremes of Ulster loyalism, through the Tories and New Labour, to the Lib-Dems, there is a British unionist consensus over the need to defend the UK state. The SNP only seeks to give some of these imperialist institutions a thick coat of tartan paint. That is why they defend her majesty's Scottish regiments so vehemently.

Others, on the Left, such as the SWP, believe the British state can be pressured in a progressive direction, effectively making them part of the British popular front. You are either for the break-up of the British state or you are not. The SWP's sister organisation in the North of Ireland omitted to mention the presence of British troops in their General

Election manifesto! There is a very broad Right, Left and Centre, British unionist popular front.

This can only be countered by a Socialist Republican United Front of political organisations in Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England committed to the defeat of the British unionist state and its Crown Powers, and to the establishment of democratic secular republics in each of these nations. Communists would be able to show that the only final guarantee of all our freedoms - national, religious and sexual - is the creation of an international socialist society which finally ends the capitalist exploitation which underwrites all oppression. Forward to real political, economic and social freedom.

INDUSTRIAL REPUBLICANISM

We also need to unshackle our class from the stranglehold of the anti-trade union laws imposed by the British state and accepted by the TUC and trade union officials. They too are very much an integral part of the British unionist popular front. They pursue partnership deals with the employers and the New Labour government. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, they have given their full backing to the state's devolution measures, the Scottish Assembly and the Good Friday Agreement, which are designed to ensure continued British unionist rule.

There needs to be Rank and File industrial united fronts, acting completely independently of the union officials. At present our slogan should still be, "In the unions but independent of the full-time officials". But there is also a need for new revolutionary democratic industrial unions which command the support of major sections of the workers, and which can form an alternative to and eventually replace the British TUC and its constituent unions. These new bodies should be encouraged to act as citizens' organisations and not be subject to the British state. There is a precedent in James Larkin and James Connolly's creation of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, which formed the main base for the Irish Citizen Army, which grew out of the 1913 Dublin Lockout. Such industrial organisations should also be urged to support, but not be controlled by, the republican united front political organisations.

Working class unity and solidarity are the keys to defending all our freedoms - political, social, sexual and religious.

A NOTE OF HOPE IN THE POLLS

People all over the world are fighting back - from Venezuela and Bolivia to Iraq and Palestine. In 'sectarian' Scotland two recent polls reflected some of this. 49% voted for a republican president against 37% for a prime minister (appointed by the Queen). In the second poll in the *Scottish Socialist Voice*, a staggering 17.5% of people in Scotland already support the SSP's core aim of supporting an independent socialist republic of Scotland. You could start a revolution with that.

So let's get out there and start beating the big Scottish socialist republican drum and drown out the noise of those drumming and marching to a different tune.